

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1389

S E C R E T ISLAMABAD 4530

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PK, US

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER TO THE SECRETARY

REF: STATE 100260

1. AS OUR REPORTS SPELL OUT, THE GOP'S SUSTAINED CAMPAIGN ACCUSING THE US OF A CONSPIRACY AGAINST BHUTTO IS CONTINUING WITHOUT LETUP, AND WE ARE CONVINCED IT WILL CONTINUE. IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT WE HAVE ASSESSED PM BHUTTO'S LETTER TO THE SECRETARY. WE BELIEVE IT IS A CLEVER MOVE IN AN EFFORT ON HIS PART TO KEEP US OFF BALANCE AND UNCERTAIN ABOUT HIS EVENTUAL INTENTIONS IN MOUNTING THIS CAMPAIGN AGAINST US. IT GIVES FURTHER SUBSTANCE TO OUR BELIEF THAT HIS OFFENSIVE IS BEING ORCHESTRATED PRIMARILY FOR DOMESTIC REASONS AND THAT HE WOULD LIKE, IF POSSIBLE, TO AVOID IRREPARABLE DAMAGE TO LONG-TERM US/PAK RELATIONS. HE IS IN EFFECT TELLING US THAT FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST HE IS NOT GOING TO ALLOW THIS CAMPAIGN TO GET COMPLETELY OUT OF HAND (THE DEFINITION TO BE HIS), THOUGH AT THE SAME TIME HE IS NOT PREPARED TO TURN IT OFF. HE HAS SERVED NOTICE THAT HE IS KEEPING HIS OPTIONS OPEN. IN DOING THIS, AND IN USING NOTABLY WARM LANGUAGE IN HIS FINAL PARA (ALONG

WITH A REFERENCE TO "MOUNTING SOVIET PRESSURE" EARLIER

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IN THE LETTER), HE IS SEEKING TO WARD OFF ANY HARSH ACTION ON OUR PART. IN SHORT, THE LETTER IS DESIGNED TO ENSURE THAT IT IS BHUTTO WHO WILL CONTINUE TO CALL THE TUNE. WE ARE SUPPOSED TO REACT, HE WOULD EXPECT IN A CONCILIATORY WAY, TO HIS LEAD.

2. WE NEED A STRATEGY TO BREAK THROUGH THIS BHUTTO APPROACH,

AND TO GAIN THE INITIATIVE. WE BELIEVE THAT OUR REPLY TO BHUTTO'S LETTER SHOULD BE A KEY PART OF THIS STRATEGY.

3. THE STRATEGY WE RECOMMEND WOULD COMPRISE THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS.

4. IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, WE SHOULD ISSUE A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE STANDDOWN APPROACH RECOMMENDED IN ISLAMABAD 4398. IN MAKING THIS ANNOUNCEMENT, WE SHOULD ALSO STATE THAT THE SECRETARY HAD RECEIVED A REPLY FROM THE PM WHICH WE REGARDED AS PROVIDING AN OPENING FOR A DIALOGUE ON OUR MUTUAL PROBLEMS, AND THAT IN LIGHT OF THIS WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT THE STANDDOWN WOULD BE OF SHORT DURATION. THE ANNOUNCEMENT SHOULD FURTHER STATE THAT THE SECRETARY HAD PROPOSED TO THE PM THAT AN APPROPRIATE FORUM FOR THE PRIVATE DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM WHICH BHUTTO HAS TOLD US HE WOULD WELCOME WOULD BE HIS MEETING WITH PAK FOREIGN MINISTER AZIZ AHMED AT THE CENTO MINISTERIAL MAY 13-14.

5. WE WOULD RECOMMEND STRONGLY AGAINST HOLDING TALKS WITH AHMED IN THE ABSENCE OF A PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED STANDDOWN. A FURTHER DELAY IN OUR TAKING ANY COUNTERACTION WOULD ONLY FURTHER PERSUADE THE PAKS THAT THEY COULD CONTINUE THEIR CAMPAIGN AGAINST US WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE TO THEIR OWN INTERESTS.

6. IN HIS PRIVATE WRITTEN REPLY TO THE PM, WHICH SHOULD BE TIMED TO REACH BHUTTO AS THE ANNOUNCEMENT IS BEING MADE IN WASHINGTON, THE SECRETARY SHOULD STATE THAT IN LIGHT OF
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THE CONTINUING CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE US BEING MOUNTED BY THE GOP AND ITS POLITICAL SUPPORTERS, THE USG HAS HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO ADOPT THE STANDDOWN POLICY ON AN INTERIM BASIS. WE WOULD HOPE THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO RESUME OUR OLD RELATIONSHIP SOON. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE ARE ENCOURAGED BY BHUTTO'S WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS OUR CONCERNS PRIVATELY AS THE SECRETARY HAD SUGGESTED. FORTUNATELY, THE UPCOMING MEETING OF CENTO AFFORDS AN EARLY AND APPROPRIATE FORUM FOR THIS. HE LOOKS FORWARD TO MEETING WITH AZIZ AHMED AT THAT TIME TO REVIEW THE SITUATION. TO MAKE THE DISCUSSION A USEFUL ONE, IT IS IMPORTANT IN OUR VIEW THAT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS REVIEW BEFOREHAND WITH THE EMBASSY IN ISLAMABAD THE EVIDENCE OF ALLEGED INTERFERENCE WHICH WE HAVE ALREADY REQUESTED. WE REMAIN CONFIDENT THAT A REVIEW OF THIS EVIDENCE WILL DEMONSTRATE THAT THE CHARGES AGAINST US ARE UNFOUNDED.

7. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE ANNOUNCEMENT AND THE LETTER BE ISSUED PROMPTLY. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE (ISLAMABAD

4376), AZIZ AHMED HAS TOLD THE BRITS HERE THAT HE MAY DECIDE NOT GO TO THE CENTO MEETING. WE SHOULD TRY TO ACT BEFORE THE PAKS FORECLOSE THIS USEFUL OPTION.

8. SHOULD THE PAKS REPLY THAT AZIZ AHMED WILL NOT BE GOING TO TEHRAN, OR INDICATE THAT THEY HAVE PROBLEMS WITH THAT SETTING FOR OUR DISCUSSIONS, AN ACCEPTABLE FALL BACK FOR A MEETING WOULD BE THE CIEC SESSION IN PARIS LATER IN THE MONTH.

9. IN REFTTEL, DEPARTMENT ASKED ABOUT BHUTTO'S STATEMENT THAT HE HAD BROACHED SUBJECT OF US INTERFERENCE THREE TIMES WITH AMBASSADOR BYROADE. ASIDE FROM DISCUSSION AT FAREWELL DINNER, ONLY OTHER OCCASION WE CAN IDENTIFY WAS IN COURSE OF BHUTTO-BYROADE MARCH 18 CONVERSATION ON INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION WHICH ACCOMPANIED AMBASSADOR'S DEMARCHE ON NUCLEAR MATTERS. THIS CONVERSATION IS RECORDED
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IN ISLAMABAD 2682 AND RELATED TO BHUTTO'S OBVIOUS CONCERN IN THE DELAY OF A PRESIDENTIAL CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE.

10. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO REPEAT THIS MESSAGE TO AMBASSADOR BYROADE AT CINCPAC.
CONSTABLE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Channel Indicators: n/a
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Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2647334
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER TO THE SECRETARY
TAGS: PFOR, PSDC, PK, US, (VANCE, CYRUS R), (BHUTTO, ALI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9d84169b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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